

Weekly Column for October 13, 2006

Welcome to the special Friday the 13th edition of the Mayor's Column. No poorly timed jokes about ladders, black cats or umbrellas, I promise.

Instead I want to discuss some of the businesses that have recently opened in our historic downtown. From art galleries like the Kismet Gallery on Fourth Street, to new antique shops such as The Living Room and 272, to eclectic boutiques like the Many Hands Gift Gallery, as usual there is a little bit of something for everyone.

In my recent budget presentation to the City Council, I mentioned that I believed 2007 would be a watershed year in the City of Troy. For years we have heard about *the* turnaround that was occurring throughout the City, and those that us who truly believe in this wonderful place could see the small changes occurring. In the next 12 to 18 months, we believe those changes will be able to manifest into tangible benefits for the taxpayers in Troy.

And while the coming months will bring about many exciting announcements, I want to share with you an e-mail I received last month about shopping during the upcoming holiday season. Karen Schlesinger, who recently opened a fine art digital printing studio on Second Street called the Digital Artist's Space, wrote the e-mail.

Karen mentions that she is a New York City transplant, who was lured to our beloved City by a few different factors, including the wonderful architecture we enjoy. However, it was her words about the holiday shopping season that caught my attention.

She said, "I have made a pledge to the city of Troy. As the holiday shopping season looms near, I have made a "Keep it Local" pledge. I pledge to do most, if not all, my holiday shopping locally here in Troy, and I have encouraged everyone else in the community to do the same. I have also asked for ideas or ways to offer incentives to people in the community to take this pledge as well. Maybe there could be a point system that for every dollar spent locally a point is earned. The person at the end of the season with the most points wins something. I am putting this question to you as well, being a person of influence in this community, and I am hoping that you like the idea and will want to help me pursue it."

There are a few things I loved about the letter, but most among them is the idea of keeping it local, and I don't mean the mall. Think about it! Instead of traveling to Wolf Road to buy a book for someone, go to Market Block Books on River Street. If you need some clever clothing for a friends, fiancée or wife, don't go to Crossgates, check out Some Girls on Second Street or Aurora's Willow Creek on river Street. While you are there pick up some flowers at Fleur De Lis, or Flower World on Broadway. And don't even get me started on the restaurants, both open, and about to debut.

Without naming every business in downtown, I hope my point is clear. We all love the City of Troy for our own reasons, and we need to support it any way you can. Shopping in downtown this holiday season is one of those ways to do just that.

If anyone has ideas on Karen's incentive program, we would love to hear those as well.

The cool weather is upon us. Stay warm, and enjoy the fall weather! Have a great weekend.

Harry J Tutunjian
Mayor of Troy